

SAGE



Monilia, Candida, Thrush, Yeast, The Itch are different names for the same thing. White spots develop in and around the vagina, with itching, inflammation and/or soreness. Sometimes there's white vaginal discharge that may be light or quite heavy and thick like cottage cheese, smelling yeasty like new baked bread. It occurs because the fungus eats into the vaginal walls and cells are shed at a greater rate than usual.

Thrush is very irritating and can make you extremely sore if it's allowed to continue. Some women suffer from it and most of us have had it at one time or another. It can be controlled with a little understanding of the workings of a woman's vagina.

All warm, wet places on this planet are teeming with microscopic life — tiny plants and animals. Some of them are fungi. The healthy vagina contains a great number of different colonies of plants and animals all living together in perfect harmony. The balance of these colonies is entirely dependent on the normal acid-alkaline balance of secretions into the vagina. It is the human pond and functions the same way as any other pond. Its internal life remains



THUJA

Ruth Hamblin describes some natural remedies

balanced as long as its external environment is stable.

CAUSE

Upsetting the Balance

If we introduce new chemicals into the vagina, or if the chemical balance changes, it either kills off whole colonies of plants directly or alters their food supply.

Monilia or Candida are two names for one fungus which lives quite normally and naturally in woman's vagina alongside all the others, until the balance is upset and certain other colonies are wiped out (including lactobacillus). Then Monilia takes over, spreads and grows out of all healthy proportion so that the condition we call Thrush results.

Natural Cleanser

Three substances are normally secreted in the vagina: there's white or yellowish cervical mucous produced by tiny glands around the cervix - when it's clear a woman is fertile, when it goes cloudy she's not — and there's liquid secreted by the vaginal walls, and the regularly shed dead cells. The secretions increase when a woman is sexually aroused and vary during the menstrual cycle.

All contain simple sugars which are the food supply for the microscopic plants and animals in the vagina including one called lactobacillus. Excess sugars cause trouble. Lactobacillus, the natural cleanser of the vagina, breaks down the sugars into lactic acid to keep the vagina acid and healthy.

Antibiotics

Lactobacillus can be killed off by various chemicals which reach the vagina either directly, through what we put into it, or indirectly via the blood stream when we take drugs like antibiotics to kill off some other colony of bacteria or virus elsewhere in the body. The balance of organisms in the vagina is then lost and Thrush results. So it's as well to think twice before taking antibiotics, using them only if there is no possible alternative treatment. Natural methods of treatment strengthen the body's resistance, antibiotics weaken it by killing off useful organisms.

Hormones

Another cause of Thrush is an imbalance

of female hormones. This can occur when a woman becomes pregnant, or by a hormone imbalance which shows itself in various menstrual problems. If the pill is the cause, and Thrush does not respond to the yoghurt treatment described below, it may be necessary to change the pill or to come off it altogether.

Chemicals

The introduction of chemical substances into the vagina, i.e. deodorants, soap containing perfume or dye, bubble bath or certain substances used for douching, causes Thrush.

PREVENTION

To prevent Thrush, Cystitis and other troubles:

- keep the vagina area dry and airy
- wash it with warm water and soap without perfume and dye, which is available from most chemists and some natural products shops
- wear cotton pants, as nylon creates artificial heat. Persistent sufferers should avoid wearing tights, tight clothes or trousers made of artificial fibres
- when wiping your bottom, wipe from front to back otherwise you risk a colli infection as well
- let some sunlight onto your vaginal area when you can arrange it

Diet

The substances you eat and drink are carried in your blood to all the tissues of your body. If you are being troubled by Thrush or anything else, it helps your body overcome the invasion if you avoid irritants like coffee, strong tea (Indian dyed tea), or foods containing chemical additives. It also helps if you stop eating animal foods for a while because digesting them produces toxins. Take plenty of fresh vegetables, and if you want, try a cleansing diet which is rich in Vitamin B.

- for breakfast (or with another meal): natural yoghurt, wheat germ, honey, fruit and nuts (fresh or dried)
- for lunch: plenty of salad and vegetables and comfrey, some whole grain or wholemeal bread
- for evening meal: the same with beans and/or seaweed

Try it for three to ten days. For protein use soya bean paste (miso) or tamari soy sauce or TOFU — soya bean curd, or soya meat

THRUSH

for the prevention and cure
of a vaginal complaint

substitutes. All are available from health food shops. It is also helpful to drink a cleansing tea — red clover with comfrey and nettle (see below for brewing instructions) which is soothing, healing and rich in iron.

Simple sugars are present in all fruits and vegetables. They are the food of the lactobacillus. The use of refined sugar aggravates Thrush; try eliminating it from your diet.

Stress

Stress is the biggest single factor in triggering off diseases and preventing healing. If you are often under stress, change your life situation before it changes you. And poor general health leads to more ailments so make sure you are getting proper food, rest, exercise and fresh air.

TREATMENT

Yogurt

If you feel a slight itch in your vagina, don't ignore it. Go straight out and buy some natural live yoghurt, it contains lactobacillus acidophilus — the vaginal cleanser. Warm a little up to hand temperature — any warmer will kill the culture. Fill a tampon with warmed yoghurt, keeping the tampon in the end so the yoghurt doesn't run out. Insert the yoghurt and then the tampon into your vagina and change it every few hours. Continue the treatment for as long as necessary; it will replace your lost lactobacillus and can't hurt you as long as you use it hygienically.

Vinegar Bath

When you bath put some cider vinegar in the water to help restore the proper acid balance inside the vagina. Let the vinegar water into your vagina but avoid getting soapy water inside.

If you catch Thrush in time, and rest in a calm state of mind after using yoghurt and eating your greens, the Thrush won't have a chance and will soon be gone. Real problems only arise if the Thrush is neglected and allowed to take a strong hold. Then make sure you have stopped doing what is causing it and continue with the basic treatment. If the vaginal opening is sore try a nappy rash cream made up of boric acid and lanolin. Or try an old plant remedy: paint antiseptic, soothing Gentian Violet on the inside of the vagina. Get someone to do it for you using sterile instruments and a speculum.¹

Douching

If you have it badly you may try douching but it should only be used with great care when a discharge is heavy and the Thrush is advanced. You can obtain a douche from a chemist. It's a rubber bulb which you fill with water and a tube which you insert into your vagina, squeezing the water out of the bulb. These days, ordinary douches are hard to obtain, chemists sell enema sets instead which work in exactly the same way but are more expensive. When douching wait until air is out of the tubing and the solution starts running through before putting the nozzle into your vagina.

For douching use cider vinegar — one part diluted with three parts of clean water. Or an infusion of thuja which is a natural fungicide, golden seal, calendula (marigold) or sage. Use one ounce of dried herbs to one pint of water in an enamel pan and bring to simmer. Leave it standing for ten minutes and strain it carefully. Douche with the infusion twice daily for a week or as long as necessary.

Fungicides

If you want to go to your doctor and get a fungicide to kill the Monilia, ask for Nystatin, and make sure that he/she doesn't give you an antibiotic as some doctors are very ignorant about Thrush and vaginas.

Relaxing Exercises

Relaxation of the muscles around the vagina is very helpful in curing vaginal infections of all kinds: lie on the floor and make yourself comfortable. Concentrating on relaxing the muscles around your vagina; let your muscles feel loose. Imagine your blood flowing into the area. Imagine that your vagina feels vibrant and tingles. Picture the mucous in your vagina as slightly moist and healthy. Do this each day until healed.

Another useful exercise is to lie on the floor on your back with your head and shoulders on two pillows. Bend your knees up, keeping your feet on the floor. Let your knees spread as far as you can, with the soles of your feet touching each other. Relax the muscles in your vaginal area. Place your hand over your vagina so you can feel the muscles relax. Rest in this position as long as you wish. This exercise stretches the muscles and tendons in the vaginal area and helps you loosen up. Learning how to relax muscles in the vaginal area is helpful in preventing Thrush because

MARIGOLD



relaxed pelvic muscles maintain the vaginal organisms at a healthy balance.²

Acupuncture

If you have had Thrush for some time and can't get rid of it, I suggest you try acupuncture in conjunction with self help methods. Note the points needled and massage them every day yourself until complete recovery — then follow preventative measures with great care.

If you are just recovering from Thrush, don't resume sexual intercourse too soon. Wait until all the soreness is gone. Don't allow yourself to get sore — if you need extra lubrication use KY jelly from any chemist.

Preventative measures are very simple and soon become a part of life. Look after your health, watch for early warning signs, don't put more chemicals into your body than is absolutely necessary, then your vagina will look after itself.□

Notes:

- 1 A speculum is an instrument for holding open the vagina for examination.
- 2 From The Well Body Book by Mike Samuels and Hal Bennett, Random House/Bookworks.

The Society of Herbalists, 65 Emmanuel House, 18 Rochester Row, London SW1 provides information on herb cultivation, books and supplies. Stockists of herbs: Baldwin's Herbalists, Walworth Road, London SE17 and Haelen Centre, 39 Park Road, London N8.



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